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ABSTRACT

This document comprises a report on retention patterns in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) showing the number and percentage of students retained in grade at the conclusion of the 1986-87 school year. Retention and enrollment data were collected from annual reports filed by all schools. Differences in sex, ethnicity, and grade level were analyzed, and differences across years were studied for longitudinal trends. The following findings are reported: (1) in June 1987, 29,786 students were retained; (2) the district retention rate dropped from 5.60 percent in June 1984 to 5.06 percent in June 1987; (3) the retention rate for elementary and senior high school students dropped from last year, while retentions for junior high school students rose slightly; (4) approximately 59 percent of those retained were males; (5) retention rates for high school students (grades 9-12) were several times higher than for elementary (K-6) or junior high (6-9) students; (6) the greatest number of elementary students were retained in grade 1; (7) most secondary students were retained in grade 10 (22.63 percent) and grade 9 (20.03 percent); and (8) although the percentage of black students retained dropped from 6.67 percent in 1986 to 6.07 percent in 1987, these students had the highest retention rate. The appendices comprise a copy of the LAUSD retention policy and five tables of statistical data. (FMW)

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RETENTION PATTERNS IN THE LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT JUNE 1987

PUBLICATION NO. 522

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October 1988

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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RETENTION PATTERNS IN THE
LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
JUNE 1987

Executive Summary

What is the Background for This Study?

The Los Angeles Unified School District produces the annual Retention Patterns report to show the number and percentage of students retained in grade at the conclusion of the school term. The findings are grouped by sex, grade, and ethnicity to suggest potential trends in retention patterns.

How Were the Data Collected?

Retention data for this report were obtained from the Principal's School Report, Form 3, completed in October 1987. Enrollment data were obtained from the ethnic survey of students, Form 7, completed in October 1986.

What Are the Findings?

- In June 1987, 29,786 LAUSD students were retained.
- The district retention rate has dropped from 5.60% in June 1984 to 5.06% in June 1987.
- The retention rate for elementary and senior high school students dropped from last year, while retentions for junior high school students rose slightly.
- Approximately 59% of those retained were males.

- Retention rates for high school students (grades 9-12) were several times higher than for elementary (K-6) or junior high (6-9) students.
- The greatest number of elementary pupils were retained in grade 1.
- For secondary students, most were retained in grade 10 (22.63%) and grade 9 (20.03%).
- Although the percentage of Black students retained dropped from 6.67% in 1986 to 6.07% in 1987, these students had the highest retention rate.

Introduction

The annual report on retention in grades K-12 is produced for Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) by the Program Evaluation and Assessment Branch. It uses findings from the Annual School Program Survey conducted each October, but does not include children's centers, adult schools, or occupational centers.

Retention Policy in LAUSD

Retention is a placement option used when there is reasonable expectation that continued experience in the same grade will be best for the student. Recommendations for retention are to be based on a continuous and thorough analysis of the student's personal and educational development, and the possible benefit derived from such retention. This policy is implemented by the local school administrative and teaching staffs in close consultation with the student's parents. For a description of the LAUSD retention policy, see Appendix A.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the retention patterns of LAUSD. The differences in regard to sex, ethnicity, and grade level have been presented as well as a group summary of the district. In addition, differences across years were studied for any longitudinal trends.

Procedure

Reports of students retained at the end of 1986-87 school year were submitted by all schools in October 1987 as part of the annual fall survey. Form 3 provided retention data by grade, sex, and ethnicity for June 1987, whereas Form 7 supplied similar categories for enrollment data for October 1986.

Findings

The percentage of retentions for June 1987 was 5.06% for the district, showing a downward trend for the past 3 years (Figure 1 and Table 1--tables appear in Appendix B).

Table 2 presents enrollment and retention figures by sex of student and by administrative region/division. The data suggest that males have a higher retention rate than females (5.79% and 4.28%, respectively).

Table 3 outlines the percentage of students retained by ethnicity and region/division. While specific enrollment and retention figures are not presented, the "percentage retained" rate represents the number of students retained divided by the number of students enrolled. Thus, if Region A had 100 White students and 3 were retained, they would have a retention rate of 3.00%. An advantage of presenting the information in this manner is that comparisons can be made both within and between ethnic classifications. For example, the retention rates across ethnic categories within the Senior High Schools Division are presented in the row "Senior High, Continuation and Opportunity." The data suggest that the overall percentage of students retained for this group is 16.15%.

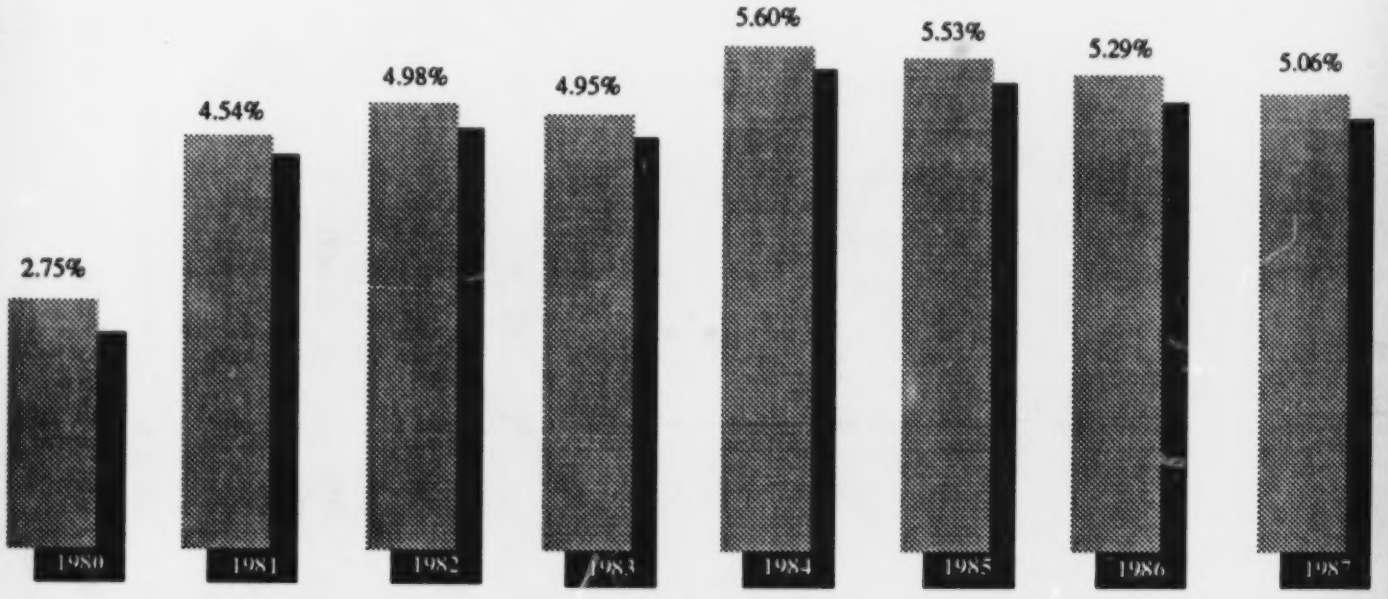

Figure 1. Percentage of students retained from June 1980 to June 1987 in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

This average value, 16.15%, becomes the "expected" rate. By comparing the ethnic group percentages within the senior high division, for example, against the total percentage (expected rate) for the division, it appears that Hispanic and Pacific Islander students have higher than expected retention rates (19.17% and 19.15%, respectively), whereas American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian students have lower than expected retention rates (6.40% and 6.93%, respectively).

Information on a single ethnic category is available by looking at the rows in Table 3. The data suggest that Black students have the highest retention with an average rate of 6.07%. However, it is important to note that the percentage of Black students retained dropped markedly from last year's 6.67%. Hispanic students posted a small drop in retention while Pacific Islander students had an increase.

Table 4 presents enrollment and retention rates by type of school and administrative region/division. The Senior High Schools Division had the highest retention rate overall, with continuation high schools having the highest proportionate retention in that division. Elementary schools had a higher retention rate than junior high schools. Magnet centers and programs generally retained the fewest students. Compared to last year, elementary and senior high schools had a lower percentage of students retained, while junior high posted a small increase.

The enrollment and retention rates broken down by grade and type of school are presented in Table 5. In elementary schools, 1st graders are retained most frequently while Senior High Schools Division retains the most students in grades 9 and 10. Students in the 9th grade are retained

at a much greater rate in high school (20%) than in junior high school (2%).

Compared to the June 1986 report (Pub. No. 499), retention at elementary schools was lower at each grade by June 1987. Continuing the comparison, retention rates at junior high schools were lower in grade 8, but higher for students in grades 6, 7, and 9. Senior high school students had lower retention in grades 10, 11, and 12, but higher rates in grade 9.

While the percentage of retained students in opportunity and continuation high schools appears high, it may be artificially inflated because of missing students in the enrollment counts. Because enrollment data are collected in October of each year and many students enroll in continuation and opportunity school after this time, they are not counted in the October enrollment but may be included in the following June's retention counts. Therefore, the percentage of retention for continuation and opportunity may be artificially high and should be interpreted with caution.

Conclusion

The results indicate that the average retention rate in June 1987 is 5.06%. While students in different groupings by type of school, grade, ethnic classification, and sex appear to be retained at different rates, these differences may not be significant. Even if they are found to be significant, they would have little educational application if the reasons for the differences are not explored.

Recommendation

Future research should focus on the significance of differences found between groups of retained students and the reasons for those differences.

Appendix A

RETENTION POLICY IN LAUSD

RETENTION POLICY IN LAUSD

Roles/Responsibilities for Retention

Promotion or retention is based on a student's reasonable progress in meeting district standards of achievement (Reference: Bulletin No. 12, Promotion Policy--K-12, Office of Instruction, August 14, 1979):

1. Responsibility for the individual's promotion to the next grade is a shared effort among administrator, teacher, counselor/supportive staff, and parent. However, the principal is responsible for the final decision.
2. In order to establish a definitive profile of the student's progress, certain records and appropriate documentation must be maintained.
   a. Teacher records must substantiate any recommendation.
   b. School organization data must substantiate alternatives or repeated opportunities for instruction.
   c. Cumulative files and attendance cards must indicate such items as performance test scores, progress, effort, and attendance.
   d. Dates of parent conferences must be noted.
3. The teacher is responsible for assigning the final mark and for recommending promotion or retention based upon assessment of reasonable progress.
4. Parent conferences shall be held as soon as it becomes evident that a student is not achieving or maintaining reasonable progress.

Retention in Elementary

1. A pupil may be retained at any grade in the elementary school. The decision to promote is based on evaluating individual progress and ability to achieve the measures of reasonable progress. Pupil success at grades K, 1, and 2 is most important before promotion to the upper grades, where increasing instructional program requirements and/or length of instructional day occur.
2. Retention at grade 6 is recommended only after other alternatives have been exhausted.

Retention in Junior High

1. Retention policy for junior high schools is developed at each school within the limits established by board policy. A student who fails to meet one or more of these policy requirements may be retained.
   a. Success with the district's performance tests of essential skills.
   b. Success in the required and elective course content (or its equivalent) during any semester in grades 7-9, as measured by teacher evaluation.
   c. Progress in emotional, physical, and intellectual growth; exploration experiences; assimilation and application of skills; and socialization.
   d. Satisfactory completion of a course of study by achieving passing marks in courses representing at least 50 semester

credits in the last 2 semesters. The completion of at least 4 semesters of attendance in a junior high or its equivalent.

2. The principal of the junior high school may advance a failing pupil because of overage.

Retention in Senior High

Policies governing promotion or retention of the senior high school student are determined by the number of credits earned within the framework of graduation requirements at the local school. Among the acceptable practices are these:

1. A student is permitted to make up failures and other deficiencies in summer school in order to stay with his/her class. Although summer school classes carry credit, the student should make certain the credit will count toward graduation. Credit, for example, cannot be granted twice for the same subject as would be the case if a student repeated in order to improve a mark.
2. A student may be permitted to attend an adult school class in addition to day classes (Administrative Guide 2102).
3. A student who has been demoted is reinstated with the regular class as soon as the deficiencies have been made up. The counselor not only works with the student to help him or her improve, but also must solicit the cooperation of the parents. This may be done by letter, phone call, or conference.

Appendix B

TABLES

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Students Enrolled and Retained, by District Totals, 1979-80 Through 1986-87

School year	Enrolled, October	Retained, June	% Retained
1979-80	547,469	15,082	2.75
1980-81	539,646	24,524	4.54
1981-82	540,803	26,947	4.98
1982-83	549,198	27,168	4.95
1983-84	556,047	31,161	5.60
1984-85	565,189	31,233	5.53
1985-86	578,962	30,638	5.29
1986-87	588,642	29,786	5.06

Note: Enrollment figures are based on the final report of each October's ethnic survey. They include all regular elementary and secondary schools, magnet schools and programs, alternative schools, opportunity schools, continuation schools, and special education schools. Retention figures are based on the principals' report from the annual survey each October, providing totals for the previous June.

Table 2

Number and Percentage of Students Enrolled and Retained, by Region/Division and Sex, 1986-87

Region/ division	Sex	Enrolled, October 1986	Retained June 1987	% Retained
A	Male	25,783	507	1.97
	Female	23,885	284	1.19
	Total	49,668	791	1.59
B	Male	30,759	778	2.53
	Female	29,652	478	1.61
	Total	60,411	1,256	2.08
C	Male	28,855	691	2.39
	Female	27,487	443	1.61
	Total	56,342	1,134	2.01
D	Male	28,196	436	1.55
	Female	26,730	281	1.05
	Total	54,926	717	1.31
E	Male	29,608	825	2.79
	Female	28,071	508	1.81
	Total	57,679	1,333	2.31
F	Male	32,297	599	1.85
	Female	29,920	411	1.37
	Total	62,217	1,010	1.62
G	Male	27,392	399	1.46
	Female	26,338	249	0.95
	Total	53,730	648	1.21
H	Male	27,262	534	1.96
	Female	25,741	370	1.44
	Total	53,003	904	1.71
A-H	Male	230,152	4,769	2.07
	Female	217,824	3,024	1.39
	Total	447,976	7,793	1.74

Table 2 (continued)

Region/ division	Sex	Enrolled, October 1986	Retained June 1987	% Retained
Sr. high division	Male	70,698	12,797	18.10
	Female	65,276	9,162	14.04
	Total	135,974	21,959	16.15
Special education division	Male	2,710	19	0.70
	Female	1,982	15	0.76
	Total	4,692	34	0.72
District	Male	303,560	17,585	5.79
	Female	285,082	12,201	4.28
	Total	588,642	29,786	5.06

Note: Enrollment figures are based on October 1986 ethnic survey. They include all regular elementary and secondary schools, magnet schools and programs, alternative schools, opportunity schools, continuation schools, and special education schools. Retention figures are based on the principals' report from the annual survey, October 1987. Senior high division includes the comprehensive high schools, and magnet, continuation, and opportunity high schools.

Table 3

Percentage of Students Retained, by Region/Division and Ethnicity, June 1987

Region/ division	% Retained, by ethnicity							
	Amer. Indian/ AK Native	Asian	Black	Pacific Filipino	Islander	Hispanic	White	Total
A	0.00	0.33	1.24	0.41	0.41	2.14	1.38	1.59
B	0.78	0.65	2.33	0.00	1.12	2.06	1.75	2.08
C	0.00	0.33	2.22	0.00	3.08	1.86	1.13	2.01
D	0.00	0.36	1.29	0.47	1.23	1.82	0.75	1.28
E	0.00	0.39	2.61	0.76	1.94	3.50	1.28	2.31
F	0.00	0.37	1.43	0.41	0.86	2.28	0.91	1.62
G	0.00	1.30	1.68	4.44	0.00	1.19	0.68	1.21
H	0.00	0.50	1.47	2.33	0.00	1.94	1.13	1.71
A--H Total	0.10	0.51	1.85	1.17	1.48	2.02	1.10	1.74
Sr. high div.	6.40	6.93	18.79	10.47	19.15	19.17	11.46	16.15
Special ed. div.	0.00	0.00	1.78	0.00	0.00	0.57	0.09	0.71
District total	2.30	2.34	6.07	3.42	5.61	5.30	4.29	5.06

Note. Percentage retained represents June 1987 retention figure divided by October 1986 enrollment. Enrollment figures are based on the October 1986 ethnic survey. They include all regular elementary and secondary schools, magnet schools and programs, alternative schools, opportunity schools, continuation schools and special education. Retention figures for June 1987 are based on the principals' report from the annual survey, October 1987. Senior high division includes the comprehensive high schools, and magnet, continuation, and opportunity high schools.

Table 4

Number and Percentage of Students Enrolled and Retained, by Region/Division and Type of School, 1986-87

Region/ division	Type of school	Enrolled, October 1986	Retained June 1987	% Retained
A	Elementary	33,879	594	1.75
	Jr. High	13,531	175	1.29
	Magnet	2,258	22	0.97
	Total	49,668	791	1.59
B	Elementary	44,722	1,156	2.58
	Jr. High	15,266	100	0.66
	Magnet	407	0	0.00
	Total	60,395	1,256	2.08
C	Elementary	42,640	663	1.55
	Jr. High	11,974	454	3.79
	Magnet	1,728	17	0.98
	Total	56,342	1,134	2.01
D	Elementary	34,846	517	1.48
	Jr. High	14,010	148	1.06
	Magnet	6,070	52	0.86
	Total	54,926	717	1.31
E	Elementary	37,641	896	2.38
	Jr. High	16,988	392	2.31
	Magnet	3,050	45	1.48
	Total	57,679	1,333	2.31
F	Elementary	40,690	777	1.91
	Jr. High	17,667	221	1.25
	Magnet	3,860	12	0.31
	Total	62,217	1,010	1.62
G	Elementary	40,432	645	1.60
	Jr. High	12,686	3	0.02
	Magnet	612	0	0.00
	Total	53,730	648	1.21

Table 4 (continued)

Region/ division	Type of school	Enrolled, October 1986	Retained June 1987	% Retained
H	Elementary	39,774	815	2.05
	Jr. High	12,735	87	0.68
	Magnet	494	2	0.40
	Total	53,003	904	1.71
A - H	Elementary	314,624	6,063	1.93
	Jr. High	114,857	1,580	1.38
	Magnet	18,479	150	0.81
	Total	447,960	7,793	1.74
Senior high	Senior HS	125,413	19,870	15.84
	Opportunity	1,127	291	25.82
	Continuation	3,147	1,572	49.95
	Magnet	6,303	226	3.59
	Total	135,990	21,959	16.15
Special education	Special Ed.	4,692	34	0.72
District	Total	588,642	29,786	5.06

Note: Enrollment figures are based on the October 1986 ethnic survey. They include all regular elementary and secondary schools, magnet schools and programs, alternative schools, opportunity schools, continuation schools, and special education schools. Retention figures for June 1987 are based on the principals' report from the annual survey, October 1987.

Table 5

Summary of Retention, by Type of School and Grade, June 1987

Type of school	Grade	Enrolled October 1986	Retained June 1987	% Retained
Elementary	K	47,918	1,094	2.28
	1	50,594	2,216	4.38
	2	47,552	1,189	2.50
	3	45,680	755	1.65
	4	45,503	443	0.97
	5	43,756	287	0.66
	6	33,326	79	0.24
	Total	314,329	6,063	1.93
Junior high	6	8,702	81	0.93
	7	39,872	619	1.55
	8	38,731	425	1.10
	9	27,552	455	1.65
	Total	114,857	1,580	1.38
Senior high	7	289	0	0.00
	8	292	0	0.00
	9	13,842	2,773	20.03
	10	49,451	11,193	22.63
	11	35,978	4,454	12.38
	12	25,561	1,450	5.67
	Total	125,413	19,870	15.84
Magnet schools/ centers/ programs	K	500	12	2.40
	1	1,049	39	3.72
	2	1,206	20	1.66
	3	1,345	17	1.26
	4	1,842	12	0.65
	5	2,050	15	0.73
	6	2,200	3	0.14
	7	2,809	4	0.14
	8	2,521	8	0.32
	9	2,419	44	1.82
	10	2,741	97	3.54
	11	2,282	70	3.07
	12	1,818	35	1.93
	Total	24,782	376	1.52

Table 5 (continued)

Type of school	Grade	Enrolled October 1986	Retained June 1987	% Retained
Opportunity & continuation	6	1	0	0.00
	7	20	7	35.00
	8	119	14	11.76
	9	436	209	47.94
	10	2,018	978	48.46
	11	1,090	459	42.11
	12	590	196	33.22
	Total	4,274	1,863	43.59
Special ed.	Total	2,935	34	1.16
District	K-12	586,590	29,786	5.08

Note: Enrollment figures are based on the October 1986 ethnic survey. They include all regular elementary and secondary schools, magnet schools and programs, alternative schools, opportunity schools, continuation schools, and special education schools. Data were excluded when grade of student was not known. Retention figures for June 1987 are based on the principals' report from the annual survey, October 1987.